

Corridor-Wide Transportation Improvements

Transit Way Concept

The Plan calls for H Street to serve as primarily a transit way with accommodations for vehicular traffic, pedestrian movement, and on-street parking. While the particular form of transit has yet to be decided—Light Rail Transit (LRT), Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), and street car options are currently under consideration—enough is known to offer recommendations regarding the allocation of uses in the existing 90' right-of-way.

Recommendations of the use of the right-of-way call for the following:

- 11' sidewalk widths on both sides of the right-of-way;
- 8' parking lane on both sides of the right-of-way with bulb-outs at each intersection to provide transit loading areas and reduce pedestrian crossing distances at intersections;
- 11' transit lanes on both sides of the right-of-way used exclusively for transit during rush hour and perhaps shared with other vehicles during non-rush hour. (These transit lanes could be shared by fixed rail transit serving predetermined station locations and buses serving each intersection);
- three 10' vehicular lanes which would allow for two lanes in the rush hour priority direction, and one counterflow lane in the center.

Municipal Parking

Future planning should recognize the important roles transit and walking play in supporting the corridor's viability as a neighborhood commercial district. As an urban neighborhood, commercial uses rely on foot traffic both from the immediate neighborhood and arriving from transit. The existing strong bus network supports this theory and the Plan expects to see increases in transit reliance with the suggested improvements. Increased intensity of uses on the corridor will be supported by improved transit.

Full-Time Curb Parking. On-street parking should be permitted at all times along the corridor. The current peak-hour restriction negatively impact parking availability reducing retail opportunities and lending to the negative perception of the corridor. Curbside parking improves the pedestrian environment and helps changes the image of H Street from a mere freeway to that of a neighborhood that is open for business. The street section that the plan recommends maintains the number of travel lanes along the corridor, but by reducing the width of lanes, parking lanes can be maintained. The street parking in front of the stores will encourage the use of the commercial by commuters as well as neighbors. People will be more likely to stop if they perceive that parking is convenient, and if slower moving traffic allows them to see the stores they are currently speeding past.

Increase Off-Street Parking. Convenient short-term street parking is only a part of the solution. Street parking must be supplemented with convenient off-street parking since the street cannot provide enough spaces to meet the parking demand. Off-street parking must be easy to access, distributed to be convenient to all the commercial, and must be safe. The plan for providing off-street parking is a combination of short-term versus long-term initiatives and surface versus structured parking opportunities.

In the short-term surface parking options need to be pursued. Vacant land such as the property behind the library can be paved and used as public parking. Mid-block locations that would not require removal of the H Street frontage buildings should be considered as municipal parking facilities. For instance, the Plan has identified the alley behind the Atlas as a potential surface parking location. In addition, existing parking lots that are currently unused, such as the fenced parking lot behind Murry's, and/or underutilized lots that are reserved for single users should be made available to retail customers. Church parking lots are a good example of underutilized lots. There are several located within a block of the retail corridor that are

restricted by signage or fencing. If agreements could be reached to allow for the weekday use of these lots when the church is not using them, both the business community and the church would gain. New surface parking lot should be controlled by signage or metering to restrict the spaces to short term use so they are available to retail customers, not taken up the entire day by employees or residents. Readily available short-term spaces available to customers will lessen the need to customers to seek parking on the residential streets in the neighborhood.

In the longer term the District should look for public parking opportunities in every redevelopment proposal that comes up in the commercial portions of the corridor. Site, which are large enough to support parking structures on the corridor, are hard to find. When properties are consolidated those sites should provide publicly accessible parking to help to support surrounding businesses as well. The plan has identified three potential redevelopment locations with the potential for future parking structures; the Murry's site, the Auto Zone, and H Street Connection. Each of these sites could provide second story parking structures with ground level retail to activate the street. The sites are well located to serve the concentrations of retail activities and are easily accessible by car and foot.

It is not unusual for a municipality to shoulder some of the burden of providing parking garages such as those suggested by the Plan. It is difficult for urban neighborhood retail areas such as this to provide adequate parking, since the cost of the parking structure is a unrealistic burden, the lot size is small and there is a goal of preservation. The additional cost of parking can make it difficult for urban retail areas to compete with their suburban counterparts. Therefore, the District should consider the construction of parking structures through the parking authority held by NCRC as municipal projects or private/public partnerships. Local examples of such initiatives include the new parking garage in Adams Morgan, or the parking districts used in Bethesda and Silver Spring, Maryland.